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California Policy Options

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Preface

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Preface

In the first year of the new millennium, California stands as a significant bellwether in setting the nation's social and political agendas. Policy makers will look to California for direction in addressing issues ranging from property tax reform to affirmative action to bilingual education. The state's strategic location on the Pacific Rim and on the Mexican border, its impressive cultural and ethnic diversity, and its willingness to embrace new ideas all contribute to its unique role as a trendsetter. The great challenge facing policy makers in California – whether on the local, regional or state level, in the public, private or non-governmental sectors – is to anticipate the import of these issues before they make their appearance on the national agenda.

The UCLA Anderson Forecast and the California Policy Options report of the UCLA School of Public Policy and Social Research combine to help policy makers do just that. The Forecast provides an expert appraisal of how the California economy can be expected to perform during the coming year. The Policy Options report provides a kind of over-the-horizon radar, which explores critical policy issues that state and local leaders will likely face, as well as provides a balanced and incisive analysis of those issues. The result, we believe, is an effective mix of information and analysis that will enable decision makers to immediately begin acting on, rather than reacting to, emerging public issues of significance.

The following chapters include overviews of the state's long-term economic forecast, its political outlook, and its health care history. Other chapters tackle such policy problems as the question of privatization of municipal services, the challenges presented by day laborers, and language changes in the workplace as a result of continuing high levels of immigration. This broad scope reflects not only California's complexity, but also the interdisciplinary mission and expertise of the School of Public Policy and Social Research. Founded in 1994, the School is a leader in creating a new paradigm in policy education, research and action. Our distinctive approach emphasizes solving problems across boundaries, particularly at the growing intersection between the public, private and nonprofit sectors. It is a mode of problem solving ideally suited to the challenges facing us in California today.

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